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WICK-SOVIETS

BY BARTON REPERT

WASHINGTON (AP) -- CHARLES Z. WICK, DIRECTOR OF THE U.S. INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION AGENCY, SAID WEDNESDAY THAT A NOVEL DEPICTING SOVIET AGENTS WITHIN AMERICA'S POWER ELITE APPARENTLY WAS BASED ON "VERY AUTHORITATIVE" INTELLIGENCE DATA.

AT A HEARING BEFORE A HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS SUBCOMMITTEE, WICK WAS QUESTIONED ABOUT ALLEGATIONS PRESENTED IN FICTIONALIZED FORM IN THE BEST-SELLING NOVEL "THE SPIKE," WRITTEN BY JOURNALISTS ARNAUD DEBORCHGRAVE AND ROBERT MOSS.

THE BOOK SUGGESTED THAT THE SOVIET UNION HAS BEEN ABLE TO DEVELOP SOME DEGREE OF INFLUENCE OVER -- OR ACTUALLY RECRUIT AS INTELLIGENCE OPERATIVES -- KEY FIGURES WITHIN THE AMERICAN NEWS MEDIA, CULTURAL CIRCLES AND POLITICAL ESTABLISHMENT.

REP. TOBY ROTH, R-WIS., RAISED THE ISSUE DURING THE HEARING, REMARKING THAT "AFTER I'D SEEN SOME OF THE THINGS THAT HAVE BEEN WRITTEN IN SOME OF OUR NATIONAL MAGAZINES AND NEWSPAPERS, I BEGAN TO WONDER IF 'THE SPIKE' WAS ALL FICTION OR IF THERE WAS SOMETHING REALLY TO IT."

WICK RESPONDED: "I WOULD SAY THAT (JUDGING) FROM MY TOP SECRET CLEARANCE THAT ENABLES ME TO SEE THINGS OF GREAT RELEVANCE ... 'THE SPIKE' IS PROBABLY A VERY AUTHORITATIVE SET OF FACTS THAT HAVE BEEN MOVEN TOGETHER INTO AN INTERESTING NOVEL."

"THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT ARNAUD DEBORCHGRAVE AND ROBERT MOSS, WHO HAVE HAD 30 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN THE SHADY WORLD OF COVERT OPERATIONS INTERNATIONALLY, ARE DEDICATED PEOPLE WHO WERE WORKING FROM A FUND OF FACTUAL EVIDENCE," HE SAID.

THE ICA DIRECTOR CALLED SUCH A PICTURE OF SOVIET ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE UNITED STATES "FRIGHTENING."

"THAT'S WHY I'M HERE IN THIS JOB," WICK TOLD ROTH. "OTHERWISE I'D BE HOME PLAYING TENNIS."

THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION HAS EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER SOVIET "DISINFORMATION" EFFORTS -- PRIMARILY OVERSEAS -- AIMED AT DISCREDITING U.S. FOREIGN POLICY.

HOWEVER, WICK'S COMMENTS WERE BELIEVED TO MARK THE FIRST TIME THAT A SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL HAS PUBLICLY ENDORSED THE VIEWS PRESENTED BY DEBORCHGRAVE AND MOSS ON ALLEGED SOVIET INFILTRATION IN THIS COUNTRY.

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